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FM AMEMBASSY NIAMEY
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 4390
INFO RUEHZK/ECOWAS COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS PRIORITY 0698
RUZEHAA/CDR USEUCOM INTEL VAIHINGEN GE PRIORITY
RHMFISS/CDR USEUCOM VAIHINGEN GE PRIORITY
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC PRIORITY
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY

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SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: PTER ASEC MOPS FR NG

SUBJECT: NIGER: UPDATE ON FRENCH HOSTAGES

REF: (A) NIAMEY 625 (B) NIAMEY 616 (C) NIAMEY 572

¶1. (U) The MNJ reports on its website that it has turned the four French uranium workers (refs A and B) over to the ICRC, along with a message addressed to the French government and AREVA. It says that Nigerien Armed Forces (FAN) MI-24 helicopters bombed the villages of Tadek (just north of Iferouane) and Tchintouloust (about 100 kms south of Iferouane, off the Iferouane-Agadez road). The Algerian paper Al Watan also reports that helicopters bombed Tadek and Tin Telous (probably a variant of Tchintouloust). (FYI: Rhissa Ag Boula, the leader of the Tuareg rebellion in the early 1990s and war commissar of the recently created Front des Forces de Redressement (ref C) has a house in Tchintouloust/Tin Telous.)

¶2. (SBU) The French DCM confirmed the morning of June 26 that the hostages were in the hands of the ICRC and on their way to Agadez. He expected them to arrive in Agadez later in the day. He said the reports of helicopter attacks were plausible, but the details were sketchy. One June 25 the French Ambassador said that senior FAN officers denied bombing MNJ position, but he said that "something had happened." He said his Embassy was in telephone contact with the hostages.

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